

**31-32-11. Effect of chapter on other legal rights and duties.**

(a) Nothing in this chapter shall impair or supersede any legal right or legal responsibility which any person may have to effect the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining procedures in any lawful manner. In such respect the provisions of this chapter are cumulative.

(b) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to condone, authorize, or approve mercy killing or to permit any affirmative or deliberate act or omission to end life other than to permit the process of dying as provided in this chapter. Furthermore, nothing in this chapter shall be construed to condone, authorize, or approve abortion.

(c) This chapter shall create no presumption concerning the intention of an individual who has not executed a declaration to consent to the use or withholding of life-sustaining procedures in the event of a terminal condition, a coma, or a persistent vegetative state.

(d) Unless otherwise specifically provided in a durable power of attorney for health care, a declaration under this chapter is ineffective and inoperative as long as there is an agent available to serve pursuant to a durable power of attorney executed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 36 of this title, the "Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Act," which grants the agent authority with respect to the withdrawal or withholding of life-sustaining or death-delaying treatment under the same circumstances as those covered by a declaration under this chapter. (Code 1981, § 31-32-11, enacted by Ga. L. 1984, p. 1477, § 1; Ga. L. 1992, p. 1926, § 7.)

**The 1992 amendment**, effective April 16, 1992, at the end of subsection (c), added ", a coma, or a persistent vegetative state"; and added subsection (d).

**Law reviews.** — For note on 1992 amendment of this Code section, see 9 Ga. St. U.L. Rev. 270 (1992).

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**31-36-1 DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE 31-36-2****CHAPTER 36****DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE**

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**Effective date.** — This chapter became effective July 1, 1990.

**Cross references.** — Living wills, Title

31, Chapter 32. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation, Title 31, Chapter 39.

**31-36-1. Short title.**

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Act." (Code 1981, § 31-36-1, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-2. Legislative findings.**

(a) The General Assembly recognizes the right of the individual to control all aspects of his or her personal care and medical treatment, including the right to decline medical treatment or to direct that it be withdrawn. However, if the individual becomes disabled, incapacitated, or incompetent, his or her right to control treatment may be denied unless the individual, as principal, can delegate the decision-making power to a trusted agent and be sure that the agent's power to make personal and health care decisions for the principal will be effective to the same extent as though made by the principal.

(b) This recognition of the right of delegation for health care purposes must be stated to make it clear that its scope is intended to be as broad as the comparable right of delegation for property and financial matters. However, the General Assembly recognizes that powers con-

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cerning health care decisions are more sensitive than property matters and that particular rules and forms are necessary for health care agencies to ensure their validity and efficacy and to protect health care providers so that they will honor the authority of the agent at all times. Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed to authorize or encourage euthanasia, suicide, or any action or course of action that violates the criminal laws of this state or the United States.

(c) In furtherance of these purposes, the General Assembly enacts this chapter, setting forth general principles governing health care agencies, as well as a statutory short form durable power of attorney for health care, intending that when a power in substantially the form set forth in this chapter is used, health care providers and other third parties who rely in good faith on the acts and decisions of the agent within the scope of the power may do so without fear of civil or criminal liability to the principal, the state, or any other person. However, the form of health care agency set forth in this chapter is not intended to be exclusive, and other forms of powers of attorney chosen by the principal that comply with Code Section 31-36-5 may offer powers and protections similar to the statutory short form durable power of attorney for health care. (Code 1981, § 31-36-2, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

#### 31-36-3. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, the term:

(1) "Attending physician" means the physician who has primary responsibility at the time of reference for the treatment and care of the patient.

(2) "Health care" means any care, treatment, service, or procedure to maintain, diagnose, treat, or provide for the patient's physical or mental health or personal care.

(3) "Health care agency" or "agency" means an agency governing any type of health care, anatomical gift, autopsy, or disposition of remains for and on behalf of a patient and refers to the power of attorney or other written instrument defining the agency, or the agency itself, as appropriate to the context.

(4) "Health care provider" or "provider" means the attending physician and any other person administering health care to the patient at the time of reference who is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized or permitted by law to administer health care in the ordinary course of business or the practice of a profession, including any person employed by or acting for any such authorized person.

(5) "Hospital" means a facility which has a valid permit or provisional permit issued under Chapter 7 of this title and which is primar-

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ily engaged in providing to inpatients, by or under the supervision of physicians, diagnostic services and therapeutic services for medical diagnosis, treatment, and care of injured, disabled, or sick persons.

(6) "Patient" means the principal.

(7) "Skilled nursing facility" means a facility which has a valid permit or provisional permit issued under Chapter 7 of this title and which provides skilled nursing care and supportive care to patients whose primary need is for availability of skilled nursing care on an extended basis. (Code 1981, § 31-36-3, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-4. Delegation of health care powers to agent; death of principal; rights regarding life-sustaining or death-delaying procedures.**

The health care powers that may be delegated to an agent include, without limitation, all powers an individual may have to be informed about and to consent to or refuse or withdraw any type of health care for the individual. A health care agency may extend beyond the principal's death if necessary to permit anatomical gift, autopsy, or disposition of remains. Nothing in this chapter shall impair or supersede any legal right or legal responsibility which any person may have to effect the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining or death-delaying procedures in any lawful manner, and the provisions of this chapter are cumulative in such respect. (Code 1981, § 31-36-4, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-5. Execution of agency; health care provider not qualified as agent; limitations on authority of agent.**

(a) A health care agency shall be in writing and signed by the principal or by some other person in the principal's presence and by the principal's express direction. A health care agency shall be attested and subscribed in the presence of the principal by two or more competent witnesses who are at least 18 years of age. In addition, if at the time a health care agency is executed the principal is a patient in a hospital or skilled nursing facility, the health care agency shall also be attested and subscribed in the presence of the principal by the principal's attending physician.

(b) No health care provider may act as agent under a health care agency if he or she is directly or indirectly involved in the health care rendered to the patient under the health care agency.

(c) An agent under a health care agency shall not have the authority to make a particular health care decision different from or contrary to the

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patient's decision, if any, if the patient is able to understand the general nature of the health care procedure being consented to or refused, as determined by the patient's attending physician based on such physician's good faith judgment. (Code 1981, § 31-36-5, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-6. Revocation or amendment of agency.**

(a) Every health care agency may be revoked by the principal at any time, without regard to the principal's mental or physical condition, by any of the following methods:

(1) By being obliterated, burned, torn, or otherwise destroyed or defaced in a manner indicating an intention to revoke;

(2) By a written revocation of the agency signed and dated by the principal or by a person acting at the direction of the principal; or

(3) By an oral or any other expression of the intent to revoke the agency in the presence of a witness 18 years of age or older who, within 30 days of the expression of such intent, signs and dates a writing confirming that such expression of intent was made.

(b) Unless the health care agency expressly provides otherwise, if, after executing a health care agency, the principal marries, such marriage shall revoke the designation of a person other than the principal's spouse as the principal's agent to make health care decisions for the principal; and if, after executing a health care agency, the principal's marriage is dissolved or annulled, such dissolution or annulment shall revoke the principal's former spouse as the principal's agent to make health care decisions for the principal.

(c) A health care agency which survives disability shall not be revoked solely by the appointment of a guardian or receiver for the principal. Absent an order of a court of competent jurisdiction directing a guardian to exercise powers of the principal under an agency that survives disability, the guardian has no power, duty, or liability with respect to any personal or health care matters covered by the agency.

(d) A health care agency may be amended at any time by a written amendment executed in accordance with the provisions of subsection (a) of Code Section 31-36-5.

(e) Any person, other than the agent, to whom a revocation or amendment of a health care agency is communicated or delivered shall make all reasonable efforts to inform the agent of that fact as promptly as possible. (Code 1981, § 31-36-6, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

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Each health care provider and each other person with whom an agent deals under a health care agency shall be subject to the following duties and responsibilities:

(1) It is the responsibility of the agent or patient to notify the health care provider of the existence of the health care agency and any amendment or revocation thereof. A health care provider furnished with a copy of a health care agency shall make it a part of the patient's medical records and shall enter in the records any change in or termination of the health care agency by the principal that becomes known to the provider. Whenever a provider believes a patient is unable to understand the general nature of the health care procedure which the provider deems necessary, the provider shall consult with any available health care agent known to the provider who then has power to act for the patient under a health care agency;

(2) A health care decision made by an agent in accordance with the terms of a health care agency shall be complied with by every health care provider to whom the decision is communicated, subject to the provider's right to administer treatment for the patient's comfort or alleviation of pain; but, if the provider is unwilling to comply with the agent's decision, the provider shall promptly inform the agent who shall then be responsible to make the necessary arrangements for the transfer of the patient to another provider. A provider who is unwilling to comply with the agent's decision will continue to afford reasonably necessary consultation and care in connection with the pending transfer;

(3) At the patient's expense and subject to reasonable rules of the health care provider to prevent disruption of the patient's health care, each health care provider shall give an agent authorized to receive such information under a health care agency the same right the principal has to examine and copy any part or all of the patient's medical records that the agent deems relevant to the exercise of the agent's powers, whether the records relate to mental health or any other medical condition and whether they are in the possession of or maintained by any physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, hospital, nursing home, or other health care provider, notwithstanding the provisions of any statute or rule of law to the contrary; and

(4) If and to the extent a health care agency empowers the agent to:

(A) Make an anatomical gift on behalf of the principal under Article 6 of Chapter 5 of Title 44, the "Georgia Anatomical Gift Act," as now or hereafter amended;

(B) Authorize an autopsy of the principal's body; or

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(C) Direct the disposition of the principal's remains,

the anatomical gift, autopsy approval, or remains disposition shall be deemed the act of the principal or of the person who has priority under law to make the necessary decisions and each person to whom a direction by the agent in accordance with the terms of the agency is communicated shall comply with such direction to the extent it is in accord with reasonable medical standards or other relevant standards at the time of reference. (Code 1981, § 31-36-7, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-8. Immunity from liability or disciplinary action; death not constituting suicide or homicide.**

Each health care provider and each other person who acts in good faith reliance on any direction or decision by the agent that is not clearly contrary to the terms of a health care agency will be protected and released to the same extent as though such person had dealt directly with the principal as a fully competent person. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the following specific provisions shall also govern, protect, and validate the acts of the agent and each such health care provider and other person acting in good faith reliance on such direction or decision:

(1) No such provider or person shall be subject to any type of civil or criminal liability or discipline for unprofessional conduct solely for complying with any direction or decision by the agent, even if death or injury to the patient ensues;

(2) No such provider or person shall be subject to any type of civil or criminal liability or discipline for unprofessional conduct solely for failure to comply with any direction or decision by the agent, as long as such provider or person promptly informs the agent of such provider's or person's refusal or failure to comply with such direction or decision by the agent. The agent shall then be responsible to make the necessary arrangements for the transfer of the patient to another health care provider. A health care provider who is unwilling to comply with the agent's decision will continue to afford reasonably necessary consultation and care in connection with the pending transfer;

(3) If the actions of a health care provider or person who fails to comply with any direction or decision by the agent are substantially in accord with reasonable medical standards at the time of reference and the provider cooperates in the transfer of the patient pursuant to paragraph (2) of Code Section 31-36-7, the health care provider or person shall not be subject to any type of civil or criminal liability or discipline for unprofessional conduct for failure to comply with the agency;

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(4) No agent who, in good faith, acts with due care for the benefit of the patient and in accordance with the terms of a health care agency, or who fails to act, shall be subject to any type of civil or criminal liability for such action or inaction;

(5) If the authority granted by a health care agency is revoked under Code Section 31-36-6, a person will not be subject to criminal prosecution or civil liability for acting in good faith reliance upon such health care agency unless such person had actual knowledge of the revocation; and

(6) If the patient's death results from withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining or death-delaying treatment in accordance with the terms of a health care agency, the death shall not constitute a suicide or homicide for any purpose under any statute or other rule of law and shall not impair or invalidate any insurance, annuity, or other type of contract that is conditioned on the life or death of the patient, any term of the contract to the contrary notwithstanding. (Code 1981, § 31-36-8, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

**31-36-9. Penalties for violations.**

All persons shall be subject to the following sanctions in relation to health care agencies, in addition to all other sanctions applicable under any other law or rule of professional conduct:

(1) Any person shall be civilly liable who, without the principal's consent, willfully conceals, cancels, or alters a health care agency or any amendment or revocation of the agency or who falsifies or forges a health care agency, amendment, or revocation;

(2) A person who falsifies or forges a health care agency or willfully conceals or withholds personal knowledge of an amendment or revocation of a health care agency with the intent to cause a withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining or death-delaying procedures contrary to the intent of the principal and thereby, because of such act, directly causes life-sustaining or death-delaying procedures to be withheld or withdrawn, shall be subject to prosecution for criminal homicide as provided for in Chapter 5 of Title 16; and

(3) Any person who requires or prevents execution of a health care agency as a condition of ensuring or providing any type of health care services to the patient shall be civilly liable and guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished as provided by law. (Code 1981, § 31-36-9, enacted by Ga. L. 1990, p. 1101, § 1.)

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**31-36-10. Form of power of attorney for health care; authorized powers.**

(a) The statutory health care power of attorney form contained in this subsection may be used to grant an agent powers with respect to the principal's own health care; but the statutory health care power is not intended to be exclusive or to cover delegation of a parent's power to control the health care of a minor child, and no provision of this chapter shall be construed to bar use by the principal of any other or different form of power of attorney for health care that complies with Code Section 31-36-5. If a different form of power of attorney for health care is used, it may contain any or all of the provisions set forth or referred to in the following form. When a power of attorney in substantially the following form is used, including the notice paragraph in capital letters at the beginning, it shall have the meaning and effect prescribed in this chapter. The statutory health care power may be included in or combined with any other form of power of attorney governing property or other matters:

**"GEORGIA STATUTORY SHORT FORM****DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE**

NOTICE: THE PURPOSE OF THIS POWER OF ATTORNEY IS TO GIVE THE PERSON YOU DESIGNATE (YOUR AGENT) BROAD POWERS TO MAKE HEALTH CARE DECISIONS FOR YOU, INCLUDING POWER TO REQUIRE, CONSENT TO, OR WITHDRAW ANY TYPE OF PERSONAL CARE OR MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR ANY PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION AND TO ADMIT YOU TO OR DISCHARGE YOU FROM ANY HOSPITAL, HOME, OR OTHER INSTITUTION; BUT NOT INCLUDING PSYCHOSURGERY, STERILIZATION, OR INVOLUNTARY HOSPITALIZATION OR TREATMENT COVERED BY TITLE 37 OF THE OFFICIAL CODE OF GEORGIA ANNOTATED. THIS FORM DOES NOT IMPOSE A DUTY ON YOUR AGENT TO EXERCISE GRANTED POWERS; BUT, WHEN A POWER IS EXERCISED, YOUR AGENT WILL HAVE TO USE DUE CARE TO ACT FOR YOUR BENEFIT AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS FORM. A COURT CAN TAKE AWAY THE POWERS OF YOUR AGENT IF IT FINDS THE AGENT IS NOT ACTING PROPERLY. YOU MAY NAME COAGENTS AND SUCCESSOR AGENTS UNDER THIS FORM, BUT YOU MAY NOT NAME A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO MAY BE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN RENDERING HEALTH CARE TO YOU UNDER THIS POWER. UNLESS YOU EXPRESSLY LIMIT THE DURATION OF THIS POWER IN THE MANNER PROVIDED BELOW

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OR UNTIL YOU REVOKE THIS POWER OR A COURT ACTING ON YOUR BEHALF TERMINATES IT, YOUR AGENT MAY EXERCISE THE POWERS GIVEN IN THIS POWER THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFETIME, EVEN AFTER YOU BECOME DISABLED, INCAPACITATED, OR INCOMPETENT. THE POWERS YOU GIVE YOUR AGENT, YOUR RIGHT TO REVOKE THOSE POWERS, AND THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING THE LAW ARE EXPLAINED MORE FULLY IN CODE SECTIONS 31-36-6, 31-36-9, AND 31-36-10 OF THE GEORGIA 'DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE ACT' OF WHICH THIS FORM IS A PART (SEE THE BACK OF THIS FORM). THAT ACT EXPRESSLY PERMITS THE USE OF ANY DIFFERENT FORM OF POWER OF ATTORNEY YOU MAY DESIRE. IF THERE IS ANYTHING ABOUT THIS FORM THAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND, YOU SHOULD ASK A LAWYER TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU.

DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY made this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(insert name and address of principal)

hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_  
(insert name and address of agent)

as my attorney in fact (my agent) to act for me and in my name in any way I could act in person to make any and all decisions for me concerning my personal care, medical treatment, hospitalization, and health care and to require, withhold, or withdraw any type of medical treatment or procedure, even though my death may ensue. My agent shall have the same access to my medical records that I have, including the right to disclose the contents to others. My agent shall also have full power to make a disposition of any part or all of my body for medical purposes, authorize an autopsy of my body, and direct the disposition of my remains.

THE ABOVE GRANT OF POWER IS INTENDED TO BE AS BROAD AS POSSIBLE SO THAT YOUR AGENT WILL HAVE AUTHORITY TO MAKE ANY DECISION YOU COULD MAKE TO OBTAIN OR TERMINATE ANY TYPE OF HEALTH CARE, INCLUDING WITHDRAWAL OF NOURISHMENT AND FLUIDS AND OTHER LIFE-SUSTAINING OR DEATH-DELAYING MEASURES, IF YOUR AGENT BELIEVES SUCH ACTION WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR INTENT AND DESIRES. IF YOU WISH TO LIMIT THE SCOPE OF YOUR AGENT'S POWERS OR PRESCRIBE SPECIAL RULES TO LIMIT THE POWER TO MAKE AN ANATOMICAL GIFT, AUTHORIZE AUTOPSY, OR DISPOSE

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